

ANGEL IN THE PULPIT

April 17, 1999 (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, wayoflife.org, fbns@wayoflife.org) – The April 5 issue of Christianity Today contains a report entitled “Angel in the Pulpit” that analyzes the preaching ability of Billy Graham’s daughter, Anne Morrow Graham Lotz. Though she does not call herself a preacher, she frequently teaches the Bible to mixed audiences of men and women. Graham has called Anne “the best preacher in the family.” Another Evangelical leader said listening to Anne is like “listening to Billy with a skirt.”

Anne, who attends a Southern Baptist church, began her ministry in 1976 with an international organization called Bible Study Fellowship. In 1988, she launched her own organization called AnGeL Ministries, using the initials of her name, as a vehicle to exercise her calling as “a female Bible expositor.” Graham opened the door for Anne’s first major public-speaking engagement at the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association’s Amsterdam ’83 conference, where she preached to thousands of evangelists.

The New Testament plainly forbids women to teach or exercise authority over men (1 Tim. 2:11-14; 1 Cor. 14:34,35), and there were no female apostles or pastors in the early churches. Yet, Anne Lotz says, “I don’t accept the fact that as a woman I can’t preach to or teach men” (Christianity Today, April 5, 1999, p. 58).

She has been challenged about her disobedience to the New Testament’s injunctions against women preachers. At one denominational meeting in the late 1980s, “hundreds of pastors in attendance stood up and turned their backs to her.”

In spite of attempts that have been made to correct her erring ways, Anne Lotz is convinced that God has called her. She said that she prayed and asked the Lord to settle it in her heart and claims that “He just took me to the Scriptures and showed me so that in my heart I’m at peace and I can stand in the pulpit very confidently” (Religious News Service, Nov. 25, 1997). It is so easy to be deceived when depending upon one’s heart. The Bible warns that it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 23:9). It cannot be trusted. We also cannot trust our feelings or mystical experiences that occur while reading the Bible or during prayer times. Many people have been deceived by their religious feelings and experiences. The first person to be deceived in this world was a woman. The Apostle Paul gives this as a reason why women are forbidden to teach or usurp authority over the man (1 Tim. 2:14). One cannot trust anything in this world except the Bible RIGHTLY DIVIDED.

Anne Lotz says the Lord confirmed her calling through passages such as Jeremiah 1:17: “Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them.” She says God spoke to her through this passage, saying, “You’re to stand up and say whatever I tell you. You’re not accountable to your audience. You’re accountable to me.” Yet, the passage in Jeremiah is twisted entirely out of its context, which was the preaching of a MALE prophet! There is no support for a woman’s call to preach in the book of Jeremiah.

Anne Lotz also claims that the Gospels confirm her call to preach. She points to the situation in which an angel instructed the two Marys to go and inform the other disciples that the Lord Jesus Christ was risen (Matt. 27:1-7). Lotz reasons that since Mary was a woman and she was sent to tell men about Christ’s resurrection, that is biblical support for her to preach to men.

To make such a conclusion, though, throws the Bible into contradictory confusion. It is obvious that Lotz’s interpretation is erroneous because the Apostles, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, plainly and carefully put strictures upon the woman’s ministry. There is nothing wrong with a

woman talking with and sharing her testimony with a man, but she is strictly forbidden to teach the Word of God to men and to stand before them in a position of authority, which preaching and teaching the Bible certainly is. It is an issue of authority. The woman is forbidden to have authority over men. Though Anne Lotz says that she does not intend to be ordained herself, she is not opposed to women being ordained. She said: "My message is not to put women in the pulpit, but if that happens and through that somebody else can serve God in the way God called her, then I'd be glad."

Lotz said that Christians should respect the views of others, even if we disagree with them and believe they are unscriptural. She said: "I respect people's opinions ... But I also want to be respected for the fact that I have thought about it carefully, prayed it through, feel like from Scripture God has shown me something different and I just agree to disagree with them."

That is not the attitude that the Apostle Paul taught to the preacher Timothy. After writing the epistle of 1 Timothy, containing instruction about the church, Paul gave Timothy a solemn admonition: "I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou KEEP THIS COMMANDMENT WITHOUT SPOT, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Timothy 6:13,14).

Timothy was commanded to keep THE DETAILS of apostolic instruction. It so happens that the epistle of first Timothy is the one that contains some of the plainest instruction about the woman's ministry.

"Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (1 Timothy 2:11-14).

The man of God is commanded to keep this instruction without spot until Christ returns. Further, this same epistle contains the qualifications for church officers, pastors and deacons. In both cases they are to be the husbands of one wife (1 Timothy 3:2,12). These are qualifications that a woman cannot meet. There were no women apostles or pastors in the first churches, and women are forbidden to be church leaders throughout the church age until Christ returns. Women have many glorious duties to perform in this dark world, but their duties do not include teaching nor usurping authority over men.